

Western Grain Transportation Act

The coalition in British Columbia, which was formed in 1975, and which was a Conservative, Liberal and Social Credit coalition, had some very important things to say about rail car upgrading. As Members in this Party will recall, the New Democratic Party in 1974 entered into the production of box cars in a plant in Squamish. That plant was the most modern rail car plant in Canada, in fact in North America. It employed over 300 people. It could produce over a box car a day and had orders for years in advance. The Social Credit Government in one of its first activities, the Conservative-Liberal coalition called Social Credit, decided that it did not want those 300 jobs, that it was government intervention in free enterprise, and I suppose that was their rationale for closing down the plant. We still have no rail boxcar plant in British Columbia. We have no opportunity to have one because all the equipment in the original plant was sold because of some philosophical aversion to government involvement.

The Bill before us and the amendment which the New Democratic Party is moving would see some of the Power of the Minister taken away and put back into the hands of the Canadian Wheat Board where it rightfully belongs. Motion No. 55 replacing Clause 33 would do the following. It reads:

That Bill C-155 be amended in Clause 33 by striking out lines 11 to 43 at page 16 and substituting the following therefor:

"for the purpose of moving grain and the Minister shall take every reasonable initiative to ensure that an adequate supply of rolling stock will be provided for the efficient, reliable and effective movement of grain.

That is an admirable attempt. The Motion continues as follows:

(2) The Minister may enter into agreements with the owners or lessees of railway cars.

(3) The Canadian Wheat Board shall administer and control any railway cars acquired or leased by the Board or by the Minister on behalf of Her Majesty.

(4) The Canadian Wheat Board may, in respect of railway cars under its administration and control, enter into agreements with the railway companies respecting the operation of the railway cars."

It seems that the Canadian Wheat Board, which is responsible to the producers of grain, should have the responsibility of determining what boxcars, grain cars, are available for the transportation of grain, and should be responsible for acquiring or leasing appropriate cars, taking that responsibility away from the Minister of Transport who has other responsibilities toward the Canadian wheat industry. If this does not happen, I can see the possibility of the Minister of Transport taking the same narrow attitude toward government involvement in the production of railway cars as the Socred-Liberal coalition in British Columbia in 1975-1976.

● (0215)

It should really be up to the Canadian Wheat Board to determine who should purchase those cars and from where they should be purchased. That it not happening. It did not happen in British Columbia. I suspect the same attitudes would exist at the federal level, whether it be a Liberal or a Conservative Government in the next couple of years, that is, before the New Democratic Party rightfully assumes its posi-

tion as the Government of Canada some time in the near future.

If the Liberal-Conservative coalition continues to approach the grain industry and farmers in Saskatchewan and Manitoba in the manner it has, certainly it will lose a great deal of support. Because of its inability to enunciate clearly its real position on the Crow to the people in the Prairies or in British Columbia, it will lose a great deal of support in British Columbia. No one understands what is its position. No one will find out what is its position, by the looks of the debate in the House tonight. Neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives want to participate in the debate on these very important amendments.

Mr. Malone: Do you still wonder why you are at 16 per cent?

Mr. Miller: We will see the Tories at 16 per cent again.

Mr. Malone: It will be 116 per cent.

Mr. Miller: That is wishful thinking on the part of the Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) who finds himself having slipped seven points in the poll last month. Four months like that and they will be in their rightful position, and the race will be on for government at that time.

The people of British Columbia want to know what is the Tory position. Hon. Members of the Conservative Party want to have it both ways. They want to pretend to grain producers that they are in favour of a three-year delay in changes to the Crow. At the same time they want to see massive subsidies going to CP and CN. By the looks of it, they want to see the British Columbia coal lands remaining in the hands of the federal Government. That is not an adequate position for the people of British Columbia who, at the moment, are in the throes of fighting a very repressive Government which is basically comprised of Liberals and Conservatives. Their Government is attacking not only the civil rights of the entire population, but at the moment it is putting the entire province into economic trouble as a result of a possible strike in the public sector within the next 40 minutes. That Government does not respect the views of the community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Peterson): The Chair would very much appreciate it if the Hon. Member for Nanaimo-Alberni (Mr. Miller) could restrict his remarks to those which are relevant to the important debate at hand.

Mr. Miller: Mr. Speaker, I think the type of Government representing the people is very relevant. I was just making the point that the Government will take control of the acquisition and leasing of rail cars as a result of this Bill. The Government does not respect the view of farmers who are saying that the Canadian Wheat Board should control the distribution of cars. Therefore I think my remarks are very relevant. Hon. Members must appreciate the intent of the Bill. It will take control over the acquisition and leasing of rail cars. We have seen the Government in British Columbia take over the control of a rail car plant, a plant which could have provided boxcars for the